6.3
Life below water

Facilitating research from our vessels

During the summer campaign of 2022, Heerema supported Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and Dr. Joop Coolen in collecting data for the Artificial Structures and the functioning of the North Sea EcoSyStem (ASSESS) project.

We assisted in this research in parallel with a Heerema project to remove topsides from a decommissioned oil platform in the Northern North Sea.

The WUR research aims to investigate the ecological value of artificial structures - including oil & gas platforms - in the North Sea. The artificial hard substrate on oil and gas platforms creates artificial reefs, which provide a habitat for multiple organisms (also known as fouling organisms or marine growth), increasing local biodiversity and potentially benefiting the wider marine environment. Over the last few years, the biodiversity of fouling organisms on platforms has been thoroughly investigated, but their functions require further research.

FIT WITH SDGs

To move values into action, we use our Sustainability Roadmap. Based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it provides focus on our achievements, ongoing projects, and ambitions.

This sustainability initiative contributes to a number of Sustainable Development Goals, among others:
14 **SDG 14** (Life Below Water) by increasing scientific knowledge and developing research capacity.

FIT WITH STRATEGY

As part of our Dare to Care program, we care for the environment we work in.

Samples were collected from the marine growth on the platform, the surrounding seabed, the water column, and larger species such as fish and crabs to investigate the food web properties on and around the platform. These samples were conserved on board and later processed in a laboratory.

Heerema has supported the WUR research by accommodating the research team and their laboratory onboard Sleipnir. Furthermore, Heerema supported the collection of the samples using Heerema's submersible robots and cranes.

Despite the limited time available onboard Sleipnir, we were able to provide Joop and his team the support they needed to collect all samples. It was great to see their dedication to this project, and I'm glad we could contribute.

Ewout Bastian | Senior Project Manager Heerema

I was very impressed by the operation conducted on Sleipnir. The facilities onboard were great, and all people were very interested in what we were doing and were very helpful. It was great to conduct our research on this vessel.

In our labs, we are currently working on the samples and other data we collected and hope to have the results available later this year. The better understanding of ecosystem effects will help the management of the North Sea as more background information will become available to weigh in on the decisions to be made.

Dr. Joop Coolen | WUR